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Assessment:

Switching topics at the end of October was something that was making me nervous about catching up to the rest of the class, getting everything done on time for the rest of the year, and finding a topic that I would find more enjoyable. After reading the article for this assessment and beginning to research anthropology, I am very confident in my decision to change topics and freshly excited for the rest of the year in ISM. Anthropology is described as being a combination of natural sciences and humanities, which have been my two favorite topics to learn about in high school. Additionally, anthropology is such a broad category that includes so many subtopics that I am sure I will be able to find multiple areas of interest that fall under it.

The main branches of anthropology are social/cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, biological anthropology, psychological anthropology, and archaeology. By

looking at professionals biographies who I will be calling for interviews I have learned that a lot of anthropologists have several focus areas that can fall under more than one of the main branches. Out of these choices, right now I am leaning towards social or cultural anthropology or archaeology. Social and cultural anthropology sound really interesting and I think that I would enjoy studying social and cultural interactions and their implications on humanity. Archaeology also sounds like something that I would love doing as it is hands on and can be very adventurous.

Aside from the specific branches of anthropology, the field can be applied in many ways that are not normally envisioned. A degree in anthropology can be used in business, education, research sciences, field work, etc. Anthropology can also be used as a lens to study a different idea or perspective. For example, religion and gender relations can be studied using an anthropological lens to learn about the previously unknown histories or practices that used to exist in each.

Learning about the history of anthropology as a field of study helped with envisioning what anthropology could be like in the future. One pattern that I recognized throughout the description of the history of anthropology was the constant back and forth between anthropology being considered a scientific field compared to a field in the humanities. Different anthropologists at different times focused more on one side than the other, leading to tensions between older and younger generations of anthropologists. The debate between science and humanities in anthropology sounds pretty pointless to me because I do not understand why it matters if anthropology is considered to be a science or humanities, as anthropology is a field with many opportunities that are unique and require different skills. Another pattern from the section about anthropological history was the advancement of anthropology over time as humans

have become more able to learn about ourselves and our complex history. Part of this is due to the fact that technological advancements have made it easier for anthropologists to collect data, record and store information, and complete excavations with precision and care. The constant advancements in technology and small amount of information that anthropologists have been able to discover about the history of humanity contribute to the positive outlook of a career in anthropology.

Introduction

Anthropology, “the science of humanity,” which studies human beings in aspects ranging from the biology and evolutionary history of *Homo sapiens* to the features of society and culture that decisively distinguish humans from other animal species. Because of the diverse subject matter it encompasses, anthropology has become, especially since the middle of the 20th century, a collection of more specialized fields. Physical anthropology is the branch that concentrates on the biology and evolution of humanity. It is discussed in greater detail in the article human evolution. The branches that study the social and cultural constructions of human groups are variously recognized as belonging to cultural anthropology (or ethnology), social anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and psychological anthropology (see *below*). Archaeology (see *below*), as the method of investigation of prehistoric cultures, has been an integral part of anthropology since it became a self-conscious discipline in the latter half of the 19th century. (For a longer treatment of the history of archaeology, see archaeology.)

Overview

Throughout its existence as an academic discipline, anthropology has been located at the intersection of natural science and humanities. The biological evolution of *Homo sapiens* and the evolution of the capacity for culture that distinguishes humans from all other species are indistinguishable from one another. While the evolution of the human species is a biological development like the processes that gave rise to the other species, the historical appearance of the capacity for culture initiates a qualitative departure from other forms of adaptation, based on an extraordinarily variable creativity not directly linked to survival and ecological adaptation. The historical patterns and processes associated with culture as a medium for growth and change, and the

diversification and convergence of cultures through history, are thus major foci of anthropological research.

In the middle of the 20th century, the distinct fields of research that separated anthropologists into specialties were (1) physical anthropology, emphasizing the biological process and endowment that distinguishes *Homo sapiens* from other species, (2) archaeology, based on the physical remnants of past cultures and former conditions of contemporary cultures, usually found buried in the earth, (3) linguistic anthropology, emphasizing the unique human capacity to communicate through articulate speech and the diverse languages of humankind, and (4) social and/or cultural anthropology, emphasizing the cultural systems that distinguish human societies from one another and the patterns of social organization associated with these systems. By the middle of the 20th century, many American universities also included (5) psychological anthropology, emphasizing the relationships among culture, social structure, and the human being as a person.

The concept of culture as the entire way of life or system of meaning for a human community was a specialized idea shared mainly by anthropologists until the latter half of the 20th century. However, it had become a commonplace by the beginning of the 21st century. The study of anthropology as an academic subject had expanded steadily through those 50 years, and the number of professional anthropologists had increased with it. The range and specificity of anthropological research and the involvement of anthropologists in work outside of academic life have also grown, leading to the existence of many specialized fields within the discipline. Theoretical diversity has been a feature of anthropology since it began and, although the conception of the discipline as “the science of humanity” has persisted, some anthropologists now question whether it is possible to bridge the gap between the natural sciences and the humanities. Others argue that new integrative approaches to the complexities of human being and becoming will emerge from new subfields dealing with such subjects as health and illness, ecology and environment, and other areas of

human life that do not yield easily to the distinction between “nature” and “culture” or “body” and “mind.”

Anthropology in 1950 was—for historical and economic reasons—instituted as a discipline mainly found in western Europe and North America. Field research was established as the hallmark of all the branches of anthropology. While some anthropologists studied the “folk” traditions in Europe and America, most were concerned with documenting how people lived in nonindustrial settings outside these areas. These finely detailed studies of everyday life of people in a broad range of social, cultural, historical, and material circumstances were among the major accomplishments of anthropologists in the second half of the 20th century.

Beginning in the 1930s, and especially in the post-World War II period, anthropology was established in a number of countries outside western Europe and North America. Very influential work in anthropology originated in Japan, India, China, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, South Africa, Nigeria, and several other Asian, Latin American, and African countries. The world scope of anthropology, together with the dramatic expansion of social and cultural phenomena that transcend national and cultural boundaries, has led to a shift in anthropological work in North America and Europe. Research by Western anthropologists is increasingly focused on their own societies, and there have been some studies of Western societies by non-Western anthropologists. By the end of the 20th century, anthropology was beginning to be transformed from a Western—and, some have said, “colonial”—scholarly enterprise into one in which Western perspectives are regularly challenged by non-Western ones.

Fieldwork

The first generation of anthropologists had tended to rely on others—locally based missionaries, colonial administrators, and so on—to collect ethnographic

information, often guided by questionnaires that were issued by metropolitan theorists. In the late 19th century, several ethnographic expeditions were organized, often by museums. As reports on customs came in from these various sources, the theorists would collate the findings in comparative frameworks to illustrate the course of evolutionary development or to trace local historical relationships.

The first generation of professionally trained anthropologists began to undertake intensive fieldwork on their own account in the early 20th century. As theoretically trained investigators began to spend long periods alone in the field, on a single island or in a particular tribal community, the object of investigation shifted. The aim was no longer to establish and list traditional customs.

Field-workers began to record the activities of flesh-and-blood human beings going about their daily business. To get this sort of material, it was no longer enough to interview local authority figures. The field-worker had to observe people in action, off guard, to listen to what they said to each other, to participate in their daily activities. The most famous of these early intensive ethnographic studies was carried out between 1915 and 1918 by Bronisław Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands (now Kiriwina Islands) off the southeastern coast of New Guinea, and his Trobriand monographs, published between 1922 and 1935, set new standards for ethnographic reportage.

These new field studies reflected and accelerated a change of theoretical focus from the evolutionary and historical interests of the 19th century. Inspired by the social theories of Émile Durkheim and the psychological theories of Wilhelm Wundt and others, the ultimate aim was no longer to discover the primitive origins of Western customs but rather to explain the purposes that were served by particular institutions or religious beliefs and practices. Malinowski explained that Trobriand magic was not simply poor science. The “function” of garden magic was to sustain the confidence of gardeners, whose investments could not be guaranteed. His colleague, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, adopted a more sociological,

Durkheimian line of argument, explaining, for example, that the “function” of ancestor worship was to sustain the authority of fathers and grandfathers and to back up the claims of family responsibility. Perhaps the most influential sociological explanation of “primitive” institutions was Marcel Mauss’s account of gift exchanges, illustrated by such diverse practices as the “*kula* ring” cycle of exchange of the Trobriand Islanders and the potlatch of the Kwakiutl of the Pacific coast of North America. Mauss argued that apparently irrational forms of economic consumption made sense when they were properly understood, as modes of social competition regulated by strict and universal rules of reciprocity.

Social and cultural anthropology

A distinctive “social” or “cultural” anthropology emerged in the 1920s. It was associated with the social sciences and linguistics, rather than with human biology and archaeology. In Britain in particular social anthropologists came to regard themselves as comparative sociologists, but the assumption persisted that anthropologists were primarily concerned with “primitive” peoples, and in practice evolutionary ways of thinking may often be discerned below the surface of functionalist argument that represents itself as ahistorical. A stream of significant monographs and comparative studies appeared in the 1930s and ’40s that described and classified the social structures of what were termed *tribal societies*. In *African Political Systems* (1940), Meyer Fortes and Edward Evans-Pritchard proposed a triadic classification of African politics. Some African societies (e.g., the San) were organized into kin-based bands. Others (e.g., the Nuer and the Tallensi) were federations of unilineal descent groups, each of which was associated with a territorial segment. Finally, there were territorially based states (e.g., those of the Tswana of southern Africa and the Kongo of central Africa, or the emirates of northwestern Africa), in which kinship and descent regulated only domestic relationships. Kin-based bands lived by foraging, lineage-based societies were often pastoralists, and the states

combined agriculture, pastoralism, and trade. In effect, this was a transformation of the evolutionary stages into a synchronic classification of types. Though speculations about origins were discouraged, it was apparent that the types could easily be rearranged in a chronological sequence from the most primitive to the most sophisticated.

There were similar attempts to classify systems of kinship and marriage, the most famous being that of the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In 1949 he presented a classification of marriage systems from diverse localities, again within the framework of an implicit evolutionary series. The crucial evolutionary moment was the introduction of the incest taboo, which obliged men to exchange their sisters and daughters with other men in order to acquire wives for themselves and their sons. These marriage exchanges in turn bound family groups together into societies. In societies organized by what Lévi-Strauss termed “elementary systems” of kinship and marriage, the key social units were exogamous descent groups. He represented the Australian Aboriginals as the most fully realized example of an elementary system, while most of the societies with complex kinship systems were to be found in the modern world, in complex civilizations.

American anthropology since the 1950s

In the United States a “culture-and-personality” school developed that drew rather on new movements in psychology (particularly psychoanalysis and Gestalt psychology). Later developments in the social sciences resulted in the emergence of a positivist cross-cultural project, associated with George P. Murdock at Yale University, which applied statistical methods to a sample of world cultures and attempted to establish universal functionalist relationships between forms of marriage, descent systems, property relationships, and other variables. Under the influence of the American social theorist Talcott Parsons, the anthropologists at Harvard University were drawn into team projects with

sociologists and psychologists. They came to be regarded as the specialists in the study of “culture” within the framework of an interdisciplinary social science.

In the 1950s and '60s, evolutionist ideas gained fresh currency in American anthropology, where they were cast as a challenge to the relativism and historical particularism of the Boasians. Some of the new evolutionists (led by Leslie White) reclaimed the abandoned territory of Victorian social theory, arguing for a coherent world history of human development, through a succession of stages, from a common primitive base. The more developed a society, the more complex its organization and the more energy it consumed. White believed that energy consumption was the gauge of cultural advance. Another tendency, led by Julian Steward, argued rather for an evolutionism that was more directly Darwinian in inspiration. Cultural practices were to be treated as modes of adaptation to specific environmental challenges. More skeptical than White about traditional models of unilineal evolution, Steward urged the study of particular evolutionary processes within enduring culture areas, in which societies with a common origin were exposed to similar ecological constraints. Students of White and Steward, including Marshall Sahlins, revived classic evolutionist questions about the origins of the state and the consequences of technological progress.

The institutional development of anthropology in Europe was strongly influenced by the existence of overseas empires, and in the aftermath of World War II anthropologists were drawn into development programs in the so-called Third World. In the United States, anthropologists had traditionally studied the native peoples of North and Central America. During World War II, however, they were called upon to apply their expertise to assist the war effort, along with other social scientists. As the United States became increasingly influential in the world, in the aftermath of the war, the profession grew explosively. In the 1950s and '60s, important field studies were carried out by American ethnographers working in Indonesia, in East and West Africa, and in the many societies in the

South Seas that had been brought under direct or indirect American control as a result of the war in the Pacific.

In the view of some critics, social and cultural anthropology was becoming, in effect, a Western social science that specialized in the study of colonial and postcolonial societies. The war in Vietnam fueled criticism of American engagement in the Third World and precipitated a radical shift in American anthropology. There was general disenchantment with the project of “modernizing” the new states that had emerged after World War II, and many American anthropologists began to turn away from the social sciences.

American anthropology divided between two intellectual tendencies. One school, inspired by modern developments in genetics, looked for biological determinants of human cultures and sought to revive the traditional alliance between cultural anthropology and biological anthropology. Another school insisted that cultural anthropology should aim to interpret other cultures rather than to seek laws of cultural development or cultural integration and that it should therefore situate itself within the humanities rather than in the biological sciences or the social sciences.

Clifford Geertz was the most influential proponent of an “interpretive” anthropology. This represented a movement away from biological frameworks of explanation and a rejection of sociological or psychological preoccupations. The ethnographer was to focus on symbolic communications, and so rituals and other cultural performances became the main focus of research. Sociological and psychological explanations were left to other disciplines. In the next generation, a radically relativist version of Geertz’s program became influential. It was argued that cultural consensus is rare and that interpretations are therefore always partial. Cultural boundaries are provisional and uncertain, identities fragile and fabricated. Consequently ethnographers should represent a variety of discordant voices, not try to identify a supposedly normative cultural view. In short, it was an

illusion that objective ethnographic studies could be produced and reliable comparisons undertaken.

European anthropology since the 1950s

In Europe the social science program remained dominant, though it was revitalized by a new concern with social history. Some European social scientists became leaders of social thought, among them Pierre Bourdieu, Mary Douglas, Louis Dumont, Ernest Gellner, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Elsewhere, particularly in some formerly colonial countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, local traditions of anthropology established themselves. While anthropologists in these countries were responsive to theoretical developments in the traditional centres of the discipline, they were also open to other intellectual currents, because they were typically engaged in debates with specialists from other fields about developments in their own countries.

Empirical research flourished despite the theoretical diversity. Long-term fieldwork was now commonly backed up by historical investigations, and ethnography came to be regarded by many practitioners as the core activity of social and cultural anthropology. In the second half of the 20th century, the ethnographic focus of anthropologists changed decisively. The initial focus had been on “primitive” peoples. Later, ethnographers specialized in the study of Third World societies, including the complex villages and towns of Asia. From the 1970s fieldwork began increasingly to be carried out in European societies and among ethnic minorities, church communities, and other groups in the United States. In the formerly colonized societies, local anthropologists began to dominate ethnographic research, and community leaders increasingly insisted on controlling the agenda of field-workers.

The liveliest intellectual developments were perhaps to be found beyond the mainstream. Fresh specializations emerged, notably the anthropology of women

in the 1970s and, in the following decades, medical anthropology, psychological anthropology, visual anthropology, the anthropology of music and dance, and demographic anthropology. The anthropology of the 21st century is polycentric and cosmopolitan, and it is not entirely at home among the biological or social sciences or in the humanities.

Adam J. Kuper

The major branches of anthropology

Cultural anthropology

Cultural anthropology is that major division of anthropology that explains culture in its many aspects. It is anchored in the collection, analysis, and explanation (or interpretation) of the primary data of extended ethnographic field research. This discipline, both in America and in Europe, has long cast a wide net and includes various approaches. It has produced such collateral approaches as culture-and-personality studies, culture history, cultural ecology, cultural materialism, ethnohistory, and historical anthropology. These subdisciplines variously exploit methods from the sciences and the humanities. Cultural anthropology has become a family of approaches oriented by the culture concept.

The central tendencies and recurrent debates since the mid-19th century have engaged universalist versus particularist perspectives, scientific versus humanistic perspectives, and the explanatory power of biology (nature) versus that of culture (nurture). Two persistent themes have been the dynamics of culture change and the symbolic meanings at the core of culture.

The definition of culture has long provoked debate. The earliest and most quoted definition is the one formulated in 1871 by Edward Burnett Tylor:

Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Three things of enduring relevance are to be remarked in this definition. First, it treats *culture* and *civilization* as interchangeable terms. Second, it emphasizes ethnography. And third, it singles out that which is learned by means of living in society rather than what is inherited biologically.

In respect to culture and civilization, Tylor collapses the distinction between the total social legacy of a human group, including every mundane matter from pot making to toilet practices, and its most refined attainments, such as the fine arts, that has been at the heart of the debate over what culture is. On the second point, he emphasizes what has continued to be the anchor of cultural anthropology in ethnographic fieldwork and writing. At the same time, the positioning and gender of the ethnographer and the bias in ethnographic data have undergone increasingly close scrutiny. On the third point, by emphasizing what is socially learned rather than what is biologically transmitted, Tylor points up the enduring problem of distinguishing between biological and cultural influences, between nature and nurture.

Tylor's definition is taken as the inception of the awareness of culture in anthropology, but Classical thinkers such as Herodotus and Tacitus were also aware of differences in beliefs and practices among the diverse peoples of the then-known world—that is, of cultural difference. It was the age of exploration and discovery that exposed the breadth of human diversity, posing those fundamental questions of universality and particularity in human lifeways that have become the province of cultural anthropology. In the face of such diversity, Enlightenment thinkers sought to discover what could still be taken as universally reasonable—enlightened or truly civilized—in the living out of human

relationships. The French Enlightenment emphasized universals grounded in human reason against which the German thinkers, most notably Johann Gottfried von Herder, spoke of *Kultur*, which is to say the particular identity-defining differences characteristic of peoples and nations. This universalism-particularism debate between French and German thinkers, which is a version of the debate between Classicism and Romanticism, has continued to be central in cultural anthropology. There is also the related debate between idealism and materialism: European idealism emphasized the subtle meaningfulness of local configurations of thought and value over against the practical focus on utilitarian analysis of health, material well-being, and survival. This idealism flourished in German anthropology in the late 19th century, notably in the work of Rudolf Virchow and Adolf Bastian, and influenced the German-born Franz Boas, a longtime professor at Columbia University, who trained most of the formative generation of 20th-century American anthropologists. The debate between idealism and materialism in cultural anthropology continues today.

AMERICAN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The idealism of Boasian cultural anthropology found its first challenge in 19th-century cultural evolutionism, which had its origins in the early modern notion of the Great Chain of Being. Stimulated mainly by Darwinian thought, 19th-century classical evolutionism arranged the different lifeways of the world on a hierarchical and unilinear ladder proceeding from savagery to barbarism to civilization, taking as exemplary of the latter such evolved civilizations as the Euro-American and the Asiatic. The second tendency in this thought was the identification of “race” with culture. One saw the “lower races,” most of them with black or brown skin, as having, through biological incapacity for culture, fallen behind or lost out in the evolutionary competition for “the survival of the fittest.”

These unilinear hierarchies and their presumptions were challenged by the Boasians on a number of fronts. First, their fieldwork, largely undertaken among American Indians, showed the widespread influences of diffusion between cultures, stimulating culture change that rendered any simple picture of unilinear evolution untenable. All cultures learned from each other throughout their histories. Also, the discovery that cultural adaptation to particular local physical environments had an important influence on evolution led to a more pluralistic and multilineal approach to culture change. The comparison of cultures that arose in early 20th-century anthropology produced diverse theoretical and methodological consequences, most notably the concept of cultural relativism, a theory of culture change or acculturation, and an emphasis on the study of symbolic meaning. Perhaps the most important achievement of Boas and his students was the demonstration that there is no necessary connection between culture and “race,” that the capacity for culture of specific groups was not genetically controlled, and that the freedom to create cultures independent of biology was one of the great achievements of human evolution.

THE CONFIGURATIONAL APPROACH

The development of American cultural anthropology between the two World Wars and into the decade of the 1960s was significantly shaped by anthropological linguist Edward Sapir, who demonstrated the determinative effect of language on culture and worldview and who argued that culture is largely psychological. Since language is central to the task of the ethnographer, to learning, to the expression of thought and values, and to the transmission of culture, Sapir’s language-anchored perspectives have had important and continuing resonance. His psychological emphasis was influential in the culture-and-personality movement that flourished under other Boasians, notably Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict.

The Boasian resistance to the sweeping and confining generalizations of classic evolutionism had two consequences: an emphasis on culture change at a specific level of analysis and a priority on studying the patterns or configurations of local cultural beliefs and values. Pattern and configuration became key concepts for explaining the relation of culture traits to each other and the study of local patterning of cultural traits and changes over time. Benedict's popular presentation, *Patterns of Culture* (1934), though espousing a cultural psychology, is an example, as is the austere and massive *Configurations of Culture Growth* (1944) by another of Boas's students, A.L. Kroeber.

This emphasis on the study of internal patterns and configurations of particular cultures as these are expressed in language led in two directions: to "cultural relativism" and to the study of "culture contact," or "acculturation." "Relativism," which resists universal judgments of any kind, is usually identified with American cultural anthropology, mainly through the work of Benedict and Melville Herskovits. It remains a persistent challenge to the generalizing impulse in anthropology and in the academy.

CULTURAL CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

Ethnographic fieldwork had been undertaken mainly in colonial situations characterized by contact between conquering and conquered cultures. This experience produced a theory of cultural cross-fertilization (acculturation) and culture change. A legacy of colonialism was the great differential between developed and underdeveloped parts of the world. The "development project" undertaken by the wealthier nations after World War II to relieve colonial poverty and diminish global inequities has produced various cultural theories of development based on continuing anthropological research as well as strong critiques of the discipline's role in development.

Cultural anthropology has maintained its concern for the history of change in particular cultures. Kroeber was the most notable cultural historian among

Boas's students, examining change over the long term on a scale that connected easily with the historical sociology of Max Weber and the social history of Fernand Braudel. The last two decades of the 20th century witnessed a striking invigoration of historical anthropology that took issue with utilitarian and materialist interpretations of cultural stability and change, emphasizing the importance of symbols and their meaning for all human action. Marshall Sahlins was a leading proponent of this school of "historical anthropology."

Cultural ecology also has its roots in an earlier cultural anthropology, particularly the study of the geographic and environmental context of culture change. The neo-evolutionist Leslie White reacted to the idealism of the cultural approach, turning his attention to the progress of technology in harnessing energy to serve the survival and subsistence needs of cultures. Cultural ecology has sought to produce a more quantitative discipline than is characteristic of most cultural anthropology, which has remained rooted in the humanities.

CULTURE AND THE HUMANITIES

The humanistic roots of cultural anthropology produced some of the major tendencies of the latter half of the 20th century. Cultural anthropology in America has long studied the folklore, music, art, worldview, and indigenous philosophies of other cultures. Humanistic scholarship typically makes qualitative or interpretive statements about complex patternings or configurations of experience and local meaning such as can not easily be done by formal scientific procedures. In the 1950s, Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, two of the most eminent anthropologists of the period, undertook a major effort to assay the meaning of "culture" in anthropology; they concluded that it was best understood as the knowledge, belief, and habits embodied in symbolic discourse. The symbolic anthropology that flourished in cultural anthropology from the 1960s to the '80s was mainly concerned with the interpretation of the complex meaning of symbols in local experience.

An important contribution to redefining cultural anthropology in the 1970s was the interpretive movement promoted by Clifford Geertz. He argued that the main consequence of fieldwork was the anthropologists' densely interwoven, symbol-laden field texts ("field notes") and that their main products were the texts interpreting these texts, the ethnographies themselves. Anthropological work should be thus seen as a text-oriented interpretive task practiced on the rich complexities of culture and social action. A further step along this path challenged anthropology with the "writing culture" movement, which pointed up the biases implicit in the anthropologist's positioning in field research, and his or her choice of voices to hear and materials to write about in the ethnographic text. Geertz thus enabled many anthropologists of all persuasions to recognize the limits of objectivity and the inevitable "partiality" of anthropological practice and publication. A related critique came from feminists in anthropology who pressed the case of culturally influenced gender bias in fieldwork and writing.

These developments were followed in the 1990s by the "writing against culture" movement, which expressed misgivings about a common form of anthropological thought that imposed excessive and disadvantaging "otherness" on the cultures and peoples studied. This movement implicitly reasserted the humanist universalism of anthropology and pointed up how other cultures were described in terms that distanced and dehumanized them. This was a very direct and forceful challenge to customary descriptive and categorizing practices, and it provoked strong debate in the discipline. The exchange between the Sri Lankan anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere and the American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins concerning the interpretation of precolonial native thought in the Hawaiian Islands was a late 20th-century episode in the continuing debate between cultural universalism and cultural particularism.

Symbolic anthropology has given rise to a new theme, the role of metaphor—or, more broadly, all the tropes, or figures of speech—as symbolic representation of proper conduct. This is an ancient scholarly interest, dating from Aristotle in

Western thought but not unique to Western civilization. Partaking of both humanistic and scientific analysis, this approach is fruitful both for insight into the mind and the organization of experience and for the understanding of the constraints and creative possibilities the “play of tropes” contributes to expressive culture.

The turn of the millennium saw a renewal of the relationship between anthropology and the humanities, as the concept of culture was adopted as the centerpiece of “cultural studies,” with its focal interest in “multiculturalism.” The self-identification of many minorities in American society brought with it a large number of new areas of study in the humanities. Humanists, to be sure, were, from the turn of the 20th century, influenced by the anthropological work of James George Frazer and others. However, these new humanistic approaches to the study of the relation of changing thought and value to the changing social, political, and economic circumstances of a globalizing market, though not grounded in extended fieldwork and empirical ethnography, pose an important challenge to anthropology’s claim to be the interpreter and arbiter of the culture concept. “Cultural studies” pose a challenge of collaboration between anthropology and the humanities. The recent movement away from the study of small-scale societies and a new focus on the study of emergent “public cultures” in the global arena has been a significant anthropological response to this new interest in culture in the humanities.

Social anthropology

The term *social anthropology* emerged in Britain in the early years of the 20th century and was used to describe a distinctive style of anthropology—comparative, fieldwork-based, and with strong intellectual links to the sociological ideas of Émile Durkheim and the group of French scholars associated with the journal *L’Année sociologique*. Although it was at first defined in opposition to then-fashionable evolutionary and diffusionist schools of

anthropology, by the mid-20th century social anthropology was increasingly contrasted with the more humanistic tradition of American cultural anthropology. At this point, the discipline spread to various parts of what was then the British Empire and also was established as a distinctive strand of teaching and research in a handful of American universities. The years after World War II, though, brought a partial breakdown of the British opposition to American cultural anthropology, as younger scholars abandoned the tenets of comparative sociology set out by one of the discipline's founders, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. During the same period, however, the term was increasingly used in Continental Europe: the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss accepted a chair in social anthropology in the Collège de France in 1959, and, when European anthropologists established a joint professional association in the late 1980s, it took the title European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) and called its journal *Social Anthropology*.

It has been conventional to begin the story of social anthropology with James George Frazer's appointment to a chair with that title in Liverpool in 1908, but the appointment was a short-lived disaster, and Frazer himself later preferred the description *mental anthropology* to cover his vast comparative project. But distinctive teaching in social anthropology was established in both Oxford and Cambridge in the years immediately before World War I. After the war, two figures emerged as the dominant intellectual forces in the new discipline. The Pole Bronisław Malinowski was appointed to a readership in social anthropology at the London School of Economics (and a professorship a few years later); there he swiftly established an enormously influential research seminar at which students were initiated into the ideas and methods of the new school of anthropology. At the same time, Radcliffe-Brown took up a series of chairs—in Cape Town; Sydney, Australia; and Chicago—before returning to a chair at Oxford in 1937. The personalities and intellectual styles of the two men are often contrasted: Malinowski was charismatic and romantic and is still remembered for his vast

fieldwork-based publications on the Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea; Radcliffe-Brown was drier and more austere and left as an intellectual legacy a series of short, systematizing essays on comparison, function, and, above all, kinship.

In the early 1950s the publication of an edited collection on kinship in Africa occasioned a celebrated critique in the pages of the journal *American Anthropologist*. A leading American anthropologist, George P. Murdock, faintly praised the emerging school of British social anthropology for its command of deep ethnographic knowledge and its strong sense of inner theoretical coherence, but he criticized it for its narrow ambitions: it was too tightly focused on Africa, on kinship, and on a set of intellectual issues that were, in the end, sociological rather than anthropological. One of the central points of Murdock's critique was the indifference of social anthropology to any discussion of culture. In the strong version of social anthropology, exemplified by Radcliffe-Brown, culture was thought to be a "vague abstraction" of little scientific value; rather than talking about culture, social anthropologists should concentrate instead on the supposedly harder, more factual comparison of different social structures.

Murdock's attack was met by a more measured response from Raymond Firth, who had been Malinowski's first student at the London School of Economics, and Firth was especially active in the 1950s and '60s in bringing together British and American, social and cultural, anthropologists. At the same time, the younger anthropologists who had been appointed to the emerging departments of social anthropology in Britain quickly turned on the ancestors. Malinowski's ethnography retained its intellectual authority, but his theoretical ideas were swiftly abandoned by his former students. Radcliffe-Brown's successor in Oxford, Edward Evans-Pritchard, broke with his former teacher's positing of a "natural science of society," preferring instead a more humanistic vision of social anthropology. As Lévi-Strauss's work started to become known outside France in the 1950s, it offered a powerful alternative: more theoretically sophisticated and

intellectually ambitious than Radcliffe-Brown but less obviously attached to Malinowski's romantic vocation of the lone field-worker immersed in the minutiae of a single society. But Lévi-Strauss had grown to intellectual maturity as a wartime exile in New York, where he had steeped himself in Americanist ethnography in the Boasian, cultural tradition. His first major publication was on kinship theory, but he moved on to work on myth and the interpretation of ritual and symbols, themes that were of growing importance in American cultural anthropology in the 1960s.

While one strand of British social anthropology was moving closer to the concerns of American anthropology, a similar shift was occurring in the United States. Many anthropologists trained in British social anthropology took positions in American departments in the 1950s and '60s, while younger American anthropologists such as David Schneider and Marshall Sahlins, in different ways, engaged with intellectual issues from the mainstream of European social anthropology. As a mark of this rapprochement, by the early 1980s some anthropologists in the United States were using the neologism *sociocultural anthropology* to describe their intellectual stance, while in Britain the Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology renamed itself the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology in 1991.

Yet important differences remain. European anthropologists have, on the whole, been less overwhelmed by the "postmodern" shift in social and cultural theory than their American counterparts, while the canonical text of American postmodern anthropology, the anthology *Writing Culture* (1986), edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus, can be read as an attempt to make a final intellectual break from the hegemony of Malinowskian ethnographic authority. The colonial legacy of British social anthropology, although far more politically and morally complex than some critics have claimed, was especially troubling for younger radicals in the United States. In Britain, on the other hand, some of the most stimulating, and apparently postmodern, work of the 1980s and '90s—that

of Marilyn Strathern, for example—focused on classic social anthropological themes such as kinship, property, the utility of notions of society and culture, and the possibilities and limitations of comparison.

Linguistic anthropology

Linguistic anthropologists argue that human production of talk and text, made possible by the unique human capacity for language, is a fundamental mechanism through which people create culture and social life. Contemporary scholars in the discipline explore how this creation is accomplished by using many methods, but they emphasize the analysis of audio or video recordings of “socially occurring” discourse—that is, talk and text that would appear in a community whether or not the anthropologist was present. This method is preferred because differences in how different communities understand the meaning of speech acts, such as “questioning,” may shape in unpredictable ways the results derived from investigator-imposed elicitation, such as “interviewing.”

A central question for linguistic anthropology is whether differences in cultural and structural usage among diverse languages promote differences among human communities in how the world is understood. Local cultures of language may prefer certain forms of expression and avoid others. For instance, while the vocabulary of English includes an elaborate set of so-called absolute directionals (words such as *north* and *southwest*), most speakers seldom use these terms for orientation, preferring vocabulary that is relative to a local context (such as *downhill* or *left*).

“Cultures of language” may cross linguistic boundaries. Thus Native American Puebloans, speaking languages of four unrelated families, avoid using different languages in the same utterance—even when speakers are multilingual—and do not allow everyday speech to intrude into religious contexts. By contrast, their

Spanish-speaking neighbours often switch between Spanish and English and value colloquial forms in worship, as is evident in their folk masses composed in everyday language.

An important line of research explores how “cultural models”—local understandings of the world—are encoded in talk and text. Students of “language ideologies” look at local ideas about how language functions. A significant language ideology associated with the formation of modern nation-states constructs certain ways of speaking as “standard languages”; once a standard is defined, it is treated as prestigious and appropriate, while others languages or dialects are marginalized and stigmatized.

Linguistic anthropologists explore the question of how linguistic diversity is related to other kinds of human difference. Franz Boas insisted that “race,” “language,” and “culture” are quite independent of one another. For instance, communities of Pygmy hunters in East Africa are biologically and culturally distinct from neighboring cultivators, but both groups share the same Bantu languages. Yet, as mentioned above, the Puebloan peoples of the U.S. Southwest share a common cultural repertoire, but they speak languages that belong to four different and unrelated families.

The approximately 6,000 languages spoken in the world today are divided by historical linguists into genealogical families (languages descended from a common ancestor). Some subgroups—such as the African Bantu languages (within the Niger-Congo language family), which include hundreds of languages and cover an enormous geographic area—are very large. Others, such as Keresan in the U.S. Southwest, with two closely related varieties, are very small. Accounting for this difference is a significant topic of research.

Geographically extensive and numerically large families may result from major technological innovations, such as the adoption of cultivation, which permit the community of innovators, and its language, to expand at the expense of

neighbouring groups. An alternative possibility is that certain types of physical environment, such as the Eurasian steppes, favour language spread and differentiation, whereas other types, such as the mountainous zones, favour the proliferation of small linguistic communities, regardless of technology.

The question of why one language expands and diversifies at the expense of its neighbours was particularly acute at the beginning of the 21st century, when a few world languages (notably English, Spanish, and Chinese) were rapidly acquiring new speakers, while half of the world's known languages faced extinction. Applications of linguistic anthropology seek remedies for language extinction and language-based discrimination, which are often driven by popular ideologies about the relative prestige and utility of different languages.

Psychological anthropology

Psychological anthropology focuses on the mind, body, and subjectivity of the individual in whose life and experience culture and society are actualized. Within this broad scope there is no unified theoretical or methodological consensus, but rather there are lively debates about the relative importance of culture versus individual psychology in shaping human action and about the universality versus the inherent variability of human existence. The field unites a number of disparate research traditions with different intellectual programs, but it also provides an arena for principled argumentation about the existence of a common human nature.

Because of its focus on the individual who lives and embodies culture, psychological anthropological writing is often the study of one or a few actual people. Such "person-centred" ethnography augments a schematic view of cultural and social systems with a description and evocation of the experience of participating in such a system.

Researchers in the classical “culture-and-personality” school of psychological anthropology look for typical child-rearing customs, situations, patterns, or traumas that might result in characteristic responses (fantasies, anxieties, or conflicts) that in turn would find expression or resolution in the rituals, myths, and other features of the culture under study. Many employ a cross-cultural comparative methodology, seeking significant correlation between a childhood experience and adult institutions; for example, they look for a correlation between father absence and the harsh male initiation rites thought necessary to counteract strong maternal identification.

Ethnopsychiatry examines not only other cultures’ understandings of mental illness or abnormal states but also methods of treatment other than standard Western procedures. Such systems as shamanism or spirit possession and the altered states of consciousness that accompany them are understood by some in terms of dissociation or schizoid states. For others these phenomena, often considered pathological in the West, are treated as normal in cultures that make productive use of methods excluded from Western “folk psychology.”

Archaeology

Archaeology is fundamentally a historical science, one that encompasses the general objectives of reconstructing, interpreting, and understanding past human societies. Isaiah Berlin’s perceptive comments on the inherent difficulties in practicing “scientific history” are particularly apropos for archaeology.

Practitioners of archaeology find themselves allied (often simultaneously) with practitioners of the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities in the project of writing history. In the United States archaeology developed within the discipline of anthropology as a social science, contributing an explicitly historical dimension to anthropological inquiry. In Europe archaeology is more closely allied with humanistic pursuits such as classics, philology, and art history. In the last few decades of the 20th century, this marked distinction in archaeological

training and scholarship began to blur as the practice of archaeology became increasingly global and continual communication among archaeologists across national and regional borders accelerated.

Archaeologists deploy the analytic techniques of many scientific disciplines—botany, chemistry, computer science, ecology, evolutionary biology, genetics, geology, and statistics, among others—to recover and interpret the material remains of past human activities. But, like historians, archaeologists attempt to reconstruct the events and processes that shaped and transformed past societies, and, wherever possible, to understand how those events and processes were perceived and affected by humans. Achieving this understanding requires ideas about how individuals and societies are formed and how they interact, ideas that archaeologists have frequently drawn from humanistic and social science disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology. In this sense, archaeology is a uniquely hybrid intellectual endeavour that requires knowledge of an eclectic, wide-ranging set of analytic methods and social theories to write the history of past societies.

Archaeology differs from the study of history principally in the source of the information used to reconstruct and interpret the past. Historians concentrate specifically on the evidence of written texts, while archaeologists directly examine all aspects of a society's material culture—its architecture, art, and artifacts, including texts—the material objects made, used, and discarded by human beings. As a result, archaeology, unlike history, takes as its subject all past human societies, whether these were preliterate (prehistoric), nonliterate, or literate. Knowledge of prehistoric societies is exclusively the domain of archaeology and the allied natural sciences that, in the absence of written records, can generate information about the environmental and cultural contexts of ancient societies. Reconstructing the material world of past societies as fully as possible is the proximate goal of archaeology; interpreting the historical

significance and cultural meaning of that material world is archaeology's ultimate objective.

In order to systematically document and interpret the material remains of past societies, archaeologists have developed a common set of methods and procedures. These include archaeological survey (reconnaissance), excavation, and detailed analysis of recovered artifacts. Survey, or the discovery and recording of archaeological sites or other human-created features, such as roads and irrigation systems, is usually the first phase of archaeological research. Archaeological survey often employs aerial photographs and satellite images to locate human settlements and related features visible on the surface. Since the late 20th century, technologies of remote sensing, such as ground-penetrating radar, have extended archaeologists' capacity to detect subsurface features. Subsequent ground reconnaissance is designed to map and describe archaeological sites. It frequently involves the systematic collection of surface artifacts (such as pottery, stone tools, human and animal bones, metal, and other durable objects) that can reveal the chronological placement (dating), spatial relationships, and, often, the social functions of archaeological sites.

After a thorough archaeological reconnaissance that documents the environmental context and spatio-temporal relationships of settlements and other human-created features, archaeologists embark on programs of excavation to discover and document a site's material culture and the manner in which this material culture changed over time. The design and execution of an archaeological excavation is a highly technical dimension of the archaeologist's craft that frequently requires engagement of an interdisciplinary team of scientists and technicians: surveyors, epigraphists, geologists, botanists, physical anthropologists, zoologists, and other specialists. The documentary record of an excavation includes detailed maps and architectural plans of excavated structures and other features, along with large quantities of recovered artifacts, the stratigraphic locations (that is, the precise horizontal and vertical

position within the buried layers of a site) and depositional context of which have been meticulously recorded in standardized data forms.

The final procedure of documenting the material remains of past societies entails careful, and often technically specialized, quantitative and qualitative analysis of recovered artifacts. This systematic description and classification of objects by their chronological placement, material, form, process of production, use-life, and pattern of deposition depends upon a host of sophisticated analytic techniques developed to decode the history of these discarded objects, which once held social significance to the human communities in which they were made, used, and valued. Principal among these analytic techniques are various kinds of physical and chemical dating methods, including, most prominently, radiocarbon dating, which was developed in the 1940s by Nobel laureate Willard Libby at the University of Chicago.

Once the empirical evidence of past societies has been generated, archaeologists must make meaningful historical and cultural interpretations of that evidence. Archaeological evidence is most often a reflection of long-term history (interpretable mostly in decadal, generational, or even longer timescales). This means that, absent contemporaneous historical and textual evidence, archaeological interpretations are often restricted to the exploration of deeply embedded, perduring sociocultural structures and long-term sociohistorical change rather than to specific events and individual actions. As a result, archaeological interpretations rarely reach to an explanation of what events and processes meant in social or psychological terms to human actors. Nevertheless, archaeology, as a form of historical anthropology, offers keen insight into the human condition.

Physical anthropology

Physical anthropology is concerned with the origin, evolution, and diversity of people. Physical anthropologists work broadly on three major sets of problems: human and nonhuman primate evolution, human variation and its significance, and the biological bases of human behaviour. The course that human evolution has taken and the processes that have brought it about are of equal concern. In order to explain the diversity within and between human populations, physical anthropologists must study past populations of fossil hominins as well as the nonhuman primates. Much light has been thrown upon the relation to other primates and upon the nature of the transformation to human anatomy and behaviour in the course of evolution from early hominins to modern people—a span of at least four million years.

The processes responsible for the differentiation of people into geographic populations and for the overall unity of *Homo sapiens* include natural selection, mutation, genetic drift, migration, and genetic recombination. Objective methods of isolating various kinds of traits and dealing mathematically with their frequencies, as well as their functional or phylogenetic significance, make it possible to understand the composition of human populations and to formulate hypotheses concerning their future. The genetic and anthropometric information that physical anthropologists collect provides facts about not only the groups who inhabit the globe but also the individuals who compose those groups. Estimates of the probabilities that children will inherit certain genes can help to counsel families about some medical conditions.

PALEOANTHROPOLOGY

The study of human evolution is multidisciplinary, requiring not only physical anthropologists but also earth scientists, archaeologists, molecular biologists, primatologists, and cultural anthropologists. The essential problems are not only to describe fossil forms but also to evaluate the significance of their traits. Concepts such as orthogenesis have been replaced by adaptive radiation (radiant

evolution) and parallel evolution. Fossil hominins of considerable antiquity have been found in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe, and few areas lack interesting human skeletal remains. Two problems requiring additional research are (1) the place, time, and nature of the emergence of hominins from preceding hominoids and (2) the precise relationship of fully anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* to other species of *Homo* of the Pleistocene Epoch (i.e., about 2,600,000 to 11,700 years ago), such as the Neanderthal. (See *also* human evolution.)

GENETICS

The study of inherited traits in individuals and the actions of the genes responsible for them in populations is vital to understanding human variability. Although blood groups initially constituted the bulk of data, many other molecular traits, particularly DNA sequences, have been analyzed. At the turn of the 21st century, geographic populations were described in terms of gene frequencies, which were in turn used to model the history of population movements. This information, combined with linguistic and archaeological evidence, helps to resolve puzzles on the peopling of continents and archipelagoes. Traits that were used for racial classifications do not group neatly in patterns that would allow boundaries to be drawn among geographic populations, and none endows any population with more humanity than others. The concept of biological races (subspecies) of *Homo sapiens* is invalid; biologically meaningful racial types are nonexistent; and all humans are mongrels.

HUMAN ECOLOGY

Problems of population composition, size, and stability are important in many ways. An immediate aspect is the varying rate of change that may occur in populations of different sizes. Theoretically, small populations are more susceptible to chance fluctuations than large populations. Both the natural

environment and the economy of a particular society affect population size. Studies of human physiological adaptations to high-altitude, arid, frigid, and other environments, of nutrition, and of epidemiology have revealed just how versatile and vulnerable humans are.

BIOARCHAEOLOGY

Bioarchaeologists test hypotheses about relative mortality, population movements, wars, social status, political organization, and other demographic, epidemiological, and social phenomena in past societies by combining detailed knowledge of cultural features and artifacts, such as those related to mortuary practice, with an understanding of paleonutrition, paleopathology, and the discrete traits that can be detected from skeletons.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Methods to assess rates of growth, skeletal age compared with chronological age, and the genetic, endocrinologic, and nutritional factors that affect growth in humans and other primates are foci of research by physical anthropologists in medical and dental schools, clinics, primate centres, and universities. The relation between growth and socioeconomic status and other cultural factors receives considerable attention. The sequential emergence of teeth provides an index of development. Growth studies have tracked children through morphological and biochemical changes to discern why they grow. Physical anthropologists are also involved in studies of aging, particularly with regard to skeletal changes such as osteoporosis.

ANTHROPOMETRY

Bodily measurements are a mainstay of anthropological research. Digital calipers and other sophisticated instruments that load data directly into computers expedite data collection and analysis. The judicious selection of measurements

and informed weighting of traits during analyses are essential. Statistical considerations are especially important in genetic and anthropometric research.

The provision of clothing for masses of people depends on anthropometry. Substantial sums have been saved because physical anthropologists measured a small sample of the population in a particular area and adjusted the clothing tariffs to the predicted distribution of bodily sizes and shapes. The components of body build—the different tissues and dimensions—have been studied by means of factor analysis and comparisons of siblings and twins. Their modes of inheritance and responses to environmental conditions are somewhat better understood today than they were when the science began.

FORENSICS

Via expert knowledge of the human skeleton, fingerprints, blood genetics, DNA sequencing, and archaeological methods, physical anthropologists provide invaluable assistance in the identification of victims and perpetrators of crimes and casualties of accidents and wars.

Because of the wide spectrum of problems, methods, and practical applications, physical anthropologists specialize in one or a few subareas. Many research puzzles require cooperation not only among physical anthropologists but also with other natural and social scientists. Further, professions such as dental anthropology, as conceived by Albert A. Dahlberg (1908–93), cut across all subareas of physical anthropology. Modern multidisciplinary projects have greatly accelerated the acquisition of knowledge about *Homo sapiens*, and they have enhanced the quality of life for many people through practical applications.

Special fields of anthropology

The anthropological study of religion

The anthropology of religion is the comparative study of religions in their cultural, social, historical, and material contexts.

The English term *religion* has no exact equivalent in most other languages. For example, burial practices are more likely to be called *customs* and not sharply differentiated from other ways of doing things. Early *Homo sapiens* (for example, the Neanderthals at Krapina [now in Croatia]) began burying their dead at least 130,000 years ago. To what end? And how and why have such practices changed over time? What might they have in common with the multitude of burial customs—known to be associated with differing conceptions of death and life—among people in the world today; for example, what might embalming practices in ancient Egypt and 19th-century Bolivia have in common with each other and with 21st-century embalming practices in North America? How do these relate to secondary burials, involving the exhumation and reburial of the corpse or its bones, as in Madagascar and Siberia, or rituals of cremation, as in Japan, India, or France? Paradoxically, anthropologists' documentation of the enormous diversity of human customs, past and present, puts into question the very existence of "religion" as a single coherent system of practices, values, or beliefs. Indeed, what constitutes "religion" may be hotly debated even among coreligionists. The study of religion in anthropology requires consideration of all these matters, including anthropologists' own terms of analysis.

Scholars of religion throughout the world have long recognized what the American philosopher and psychologist William James (1902) called "the varieties of religious experience." Since the mid-19th century, one of the first and most important contributions of anthropologists has been to extend the study of those varieties beyond the formal doctrines and liturgies of established religious institutions to include related customs, regardless of when, where, and by whom they are practiced and whether they are celebrated, suppressed, or taken for granted. The anthropology of religion is the study of, in the words of the English anthropologist Edward Evans-Pritchard (*Theories of Primitive Religion* [1965]),

“how religious beliefs and practices affect in any society the minds, the feelings, the lives, and the interrelations of its members...religion is what religion does.”

Although Edward Burnett Tylor’s classic *Primitive Culture* (1871) documented the wide-ranging doings of his fellow Europeans, most anthropologists in the 19th and early 20th centuries focused on so-called primitive peoples living outside Europe and North America, on the grounds that religion, increasingly defined by contrast to reason, was a historically primitive form of behaviour that was already giving way to science. Subsequent research has proved these assumptions to be wrong. As anthropology has grown to include the study of all humans on an equal footing and the field of anthropology is practiced throughout the world, anthropologists continue to confront their parochial biases.

So, what is religion from a comparative perspective? Tylor’s famous “minimum definition of Religion, the belief in Spiritual Beings” betrays the origins of the anthropological study of religion in 19th-century debates over “religion” and “science” as alternative conceptions of reality. The very notion of “religion” as distinct from other human doings most likely originated in historical separations of church and state that—far from being universal—were specific to Europe and North America. Yet Tylor’s definition prompted ongoing efforts by anthropologists to achieve a more neutral vocabulary, to move from such particular terms as *soul*, *spirit*, *belief*, *sin*, *god*, *priest*, and so on (or in German *die Seele* or French *l’âme*, etc.) to other vernacular languages, and to the multilingual, multisensory interactions through which competing understandings of the phenomena in question are presented and debated.

Contrary to their earlier expectations, anthropologists have documented the increasing role of religion in public life throughout the world. Rituals, socially prescribed acts once thought to be the hallmark of religious behaviour, are now recognized as shaping human relations in many social contexts. Thus, the work of scholars like Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, Caroline Humphrey, and James Laidlaw on rites of passage and ritualization may apply much more widely.

Anthropologists now characterize religion in more open-ended terms, stressing family resemblances rather than categorical identities. They often focus on worlds, powers, forces, agents or beings that stretch or defy what is taken to be human, or humanly verifiable, and they emphasize imagination and speculation. Yet Tylor's approach to religion as a mode of explanation and understanding (and his implicit comparison with science) persists to the present day, undoubtedly because the earlier questions about illusion and ultimate reality, and the ethical issues with which they are associated, remain open to debate.

The basic analytical premise of anthropological research on religion, articulated in the classic works on religion of 19th-century scholars like Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber is that human modes of understanding, explaining, feeling, and relating are not simply derived from human anatomy or induced by patterns of external stimuli. They also originate in social forms—the division of labour, patterns of political hierarchy or equality, gender relations, and the like. Thus, whatever the ultimate reality of human suffering and death, anthropologists argue that moral insight and action derive from the efforts of human beings to understand their immediate reality in the shifting, ambiguous, contradictory, and conflictive patterns of the relationships in which they are involved and the larger order, or cosmos, in which these relations are set. The anthropology of religion thus entails a holistic approach, including attention to social-cultural, psychological, material, historical, and evolutionary dimensions of religious experience. Anthropologists' early and enduring emphasis on the social reality of religion may have grown historically out of long-standing concerns, particular to the heirs of the Abrahamic religions of the Bible and the Qur'ān, over incarnations of the divine in human (or humanly apprehensible) forms as modes of revelation. Yet, as refined through decades of cross-cultural research, anthropologists' studies of such phenomena as divinity, incarnation, immanence or embodiment, transcendence, sacrifice, prayer, preaching, prophecy, myth, prohibition or taboo, possession, divination, initiation, transgression and

inversion, missionization, conversion, and mystification have made major contributions to the comparative study of religion. At the turn of the 21st century, topics at the forefront of anthropological research on religion included moral imagination, cognition, subjectivity, secularization, the changing relations of church and state, religion and science, religious pluralism, migration and pilgrimage, religion and ecology, ethics, and social justice.

Assessment 9:

Museum-based study

Museums—defined as places for the organized collection, study, and display of objects—began long before anthropology developed as an academic discipline. Since the 6th century bc at Ur, the 3rd century bc in Alexandria, and the 13th century ad in China, museums have collected objects illustrating daily life in diverse cultures, past and present. Today many of these broadly based collections are associated with the discipline of anthropology, especially those that include osteological specimens (human and prehuman remains) providing evidence of human evolution and diversity, archaeological artifacts providing evidence of past cultures, and ethnographic artifacts illustrating the lifeways of living people.

The collecting of artifacts from distant lands and possibly disappearing cultures began about the 15th century, during the age of exploration, with the travels of Western explorers, missionaries, colonial administrators, soldiers, scholars, traders, and tourists. Anthropological collections grew significantly in the 19th century as European and North American museums acquired artifacts from

colonized peoples around the world. In the United Kingdom, the British Museum (1753), the University of Cambridge's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (1884), the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum (1884), and the Victoria and Albert Museum (founded 1852), among others, acquired vast numbers of artifacts from colonies in Africa, Oceania, and Asia. Museums in virtually every European country, including the Ethnological Museum (1829; formerly the Museum für Völkerkunde) in Berlin, the Museum of Man (1878; formerly the Trocadéro Museum of Ethnography) in Paris, and museums of ethnography in Leiden (Netherlands), Stockholm, Rome, and elsewhere, were formed to preserve utilitarian and exotic objects that were not considered to be part of the history of Western civilization itself.

In the United States most ethnographic artifacts were incorporated into natural history museums. Once the idea of natural selection validated ideas of evolution, in the mid-19th century, a theoretical justification developed for grouping the artifacts of anthropology with extinct animals and other natural history specimens. Ethnographic objects were seen as evidence of the gradual progression of human beings from "savagery" to civilization. Along with displays of living people at World's Fairs and colonial expositions, they confirmed anthropology's status as an empirical science and validated distinctions between Westerners and others. The Smithsonian Institution (1846) acquired the vast American Indian collections of the Bureau of Ethnology. Institutions such as the Milwaukee Public Museum (1882), the Peabody Museum of Natural History (1866) at Yale University, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture (1885) at the University of Washington, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (1887) in Philadelphia all included artifacts considered anthropological from their beginnings. The country's first museum devoted entirely to anthropology was the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (1866) at Harvard University, followed in 1901 by the Lowie Museum of Anthropology (now the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology) at the

University of California. The Field Museum in Chicago (1893) was established (as the Columbian Museum of Chicago) to house the collections assembled for the World's Columbian Exposition by Frederic W. Putnam, Harvard Peabody's first director, and his assistant, Franz Boas.

With Putnam's sponsorship, Boas joined the American Museum of Natural History (1869) in 1895. Before he began to devote all his time to work at Columbia University in 1905, Boas managed to shift the paradigm of museum anthropology from an evolutionary approach, in which objects from many cultures were grouped according to the evolution of specific technologies, to a culture area approach that focused on local histories and environments. While at the American Museum, Boas established a broad research agenda for museum anthropology, linking the study of artifacts to texts, photographs, musical recordings, and other nonmaterial aspects of culture.

Over the next century, as museums with anthropological collections continued to develop as research institutions, many of the anthropologists who worked there turned away from collection-based work. Archaeologists and physical anthropologists continued to use collections for study, but, until a late 20th-century revival of interest in the history of anthropology and museums and in studies of material culture and the anthropology of art, few cultural anthropologists worked actively with collections. Exhibits developed in the mid-20th century continued to reflect the culture area approach of Boas or the structural-functional model that had developed in Britain, focusing on social institutions and using objects to illustrate abstract points.

The last quarter of the 20th century witnessed great change in the practice of anthropology in museums. The civil rights and decolonization movements of the 1960s increased awareness of the politics of collecting and representation. Ethical issues that had been ignored in the past began to influence museum practices. By the turn of the 21st century, most anthropologists working in

museums had understood the need to incorporate diverse points of view in exhibitions and collections care and to rely on the expertise of people from the cultures represented as well as museum professionals. At the same time, many new museums—such as the U'mista Cultural Centre (1980) in Alert Bay, British Columbia, Canada—were established within the communities that created the objects on display. Anthropologists in museums also were concerned with issues such as the ethics of collecting, access to collections and associated data, and ownership and repatriation.

Starting in the 1930s, Western artists drew attention to the masks and carvings of non-Western cultures. These were admired not for their cultural meaning but for their form and aesthetic qualities. While museum anthropologists remain primarily concerned with the cultural context of artifacts, the boundary between art and artifact has begun to erode. Anthropology collections include the work of non-Western artists as well as artifacts from Western cultures. Artifacts representing the interaction of cultures throughout the world—including things made of recycled industrial materials or objects made for sale to tourists—are also part of the legitimate subject of museum anthropologists.

Enid Schildkrout

The anthropological study of education

From its inception, anthropology has been concerned with the processes that transform an infant with indefinite potential into an adult with a particular role in a particular group (family, society, class, nation). To achieve adulthood, an infant must learn, and much of that learning depends on how the adults around them organize themselves. A child's education takes place not only in schools and other formalized institutions but also through the unfocused processes that inform family and community life. Thus, anthropologists investigate the psychological processes of enculturation and the social processes involved in

ensuring that the various human roles that form the web of a complex society are reproduced over the generations.

Learning is at the root of most definitions of culture. From the cultural perspective, learning activates human possibilities and shapes them to fit a particular human environment or “culture.” This process has many facets, including, for example, who attends to a child (mother, older children, other caregivers), when (at various times in the day and over the years), and with what consequences (some organizations are better in allowing children to achieve particular possibilities—failure at school, romantic genius, sensitive husband and father—as these might be mentioned in a eulogy). Without extensive and long-term interaction with adults, human infants cannot develop fully. Human reproduction is not solely a genetic or psychological process; it is also a sociocultural one that produces people with particular abilities specialized for particular positions (and often exhibiting particular disabilities when assuming positions to which they are not suited).

Interest in what is known as the “distribution of knowledge” has transformed enculturation studies and is beginning to converge with work in settings where education is formalized, particularly schools. Through these institutions complex societies reproduce their social organization. There are two vital issues in the field. The first is the need to clarify the processes through which children are placed in particular positions—who and what is involved in making some people janitors and others heads of corporations. The second concerns how to understand how certain processes—particularly those grounded in school examinations and psychological testing—have become the main legitimate means through which people are placed in positions. The democratic ideal that, through testing and examinations, personal merit can be identified and rewarded has seldom worked as hoped. Educational anthropologists point to the continuity between the education the children of the most prosperous receive at home and in their communities, the organization of schooling, and the pedagogical styles

used in school. Thus, the children of poor or immigrant families are more likely to fail—whatever their individual merits—because of “cultural discontinuities,” the great dissimilarities between the cultures of their homes and neighborhoods and that of the school. Other studies focus on the structuring of schooling to show how the very concern with measuring merit continually reproduces failure on an ever-expanding scale, thereby devaluing the contributions each individual makes to the welfare of society.

These debates continue, producing ever more careful descriptions of everyday lives in classrooms and schools that reveal hidden processes—including processes of resistance, appropriation, and co-option. Each new description confirms the usefulness of the core methodological choices of the field: induction from ethnographic observation.

Hervé Varenne

The study of ethnicity, minority groups, and identity

Ethnicity refers to the identification of a group based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a “people.” This distinctiveness is believed to be expressed in language, music, values, art, styles, literature, family life, religion, ritual, food, naming, public life, and material culture. This cultural comprehensiveness—a unique set of cultural characteristics perceived as expressing themselves in commonly unique ways across the sociocultural life of a population—characterizes the concept of ethnicity. It revolves around not just a “population,” a numerical entity, but a “people,” a comprehensively unique cultural entity.

The concept of ethnicity contrasts with that of race, which refers to the perceived unique common physical and biogenetic characteristics of a population. The

criteria used to characterize a group—whether comprehensive unique cultural characteristics or biogenetic ones—determine whether the group is regarded as an ethnic or a racial group. In the late 20th century and at the turn of the 21st century, “Irish” was considered an ethnic label, while “white” was a racial one.

A minority group is a group whose unique cultural characteristics are perceived to be different from those characterizing the dominant groups in society. In anthropology the term may refer to groups categorized by ethnicity, race, gender, or sexual orientation. The term is not without controversy: Many regard it as contradictory, for the relative population growth rate of subordinated ethnic groups in the United States, if continued, is such that after 2050 the “minority” could well be the numerical majority. Others regard the term as patronizing; by emphasizing the purely numerical dimension, it evades issues of group powerlessness as well as the substantive values and interests that “minority” groups may uphold.

Anthropologists regard ethnicity, race, and minority groups as social and cultural constructs and not biological ones. In all cases the formation and perception of identities are to be explained as a result of the operation of specific social, cultural, political, and economic relationships over a long period of historical time.

Identity refers to both group self-awareness of common unique characteristics and individual self-awareness of inclusion in such a group. Self-awareness may be formulated in comprehensive cultural terms (ethnic identity), in biogenetic terms (racial identity), in terms of sexual orientation, and in terms of gender. Persons and groups often adhere to multiple and fluid identities, features of which may be selectively relevant in specific social situations.

Some anthropologists go further and call attention to the growth of “hybridity”—the dissolution of rigid cultural boundaries between groups hitherto perceived as separate, the intermixture of various identities, in effect the

dissolution of identities themselves. Much anthropology in this field demonstrates how identities have been and are invented and reinvented for political and other purposes, out of disparate historical and cultural experiences. Other studies have repeatedly shown that—contrary to a group’s self-representation and assertion of an identity—identities are riven with contradictions and are not to be understood as seamlessly unified comprehensive cultural entities.

Identity in terms of ethnicity, race, minority group status, gender, and sexual orientation is often contrasted with class consciousness—group self-awareness in terms of belonging to the same socioeconomic group. Some anthropologists write of the emergence of a new “identity” politics as distinct from an older “class” politics—the growth of what are called “new social movements.” The term *new social movements* refers to gay and lesbian, feminist, and civil rights and environmental movements and is used to distinguish these from trade union and other class-based movements. These distinctions sometimes suggest that persons have to choose between uniting for social and political action primarily on the grounds of common membership in perceived ethnic, racial, minority, gender, sexual orientation, or environmental groups rather than on the grounds of membership in a similar socioeconomic group.

Identities owe their formation and position in society to the operation of social, economic, cultural, and political forces that are inseparable from the forces that create and maintain socioeconomic groups. In this view, rather than being opposed, identity politics and class politics, while distinct, have the potential to be allied actors in a common political process.

Donald Keith Robotham

Urban anthropology

Urban anthropology is the study of cultural systems and identities in cities as well as the various political, social, economic, and cultural forces that shape urban forms and processes. Although anthropologists have studied the city since the 1930s, the label *urban anthropology* became common only in the early 1960s. Interest in urban issues was originally an extension of the anthropological interest in peasants and rural areas. Using research methods developed for and through studies of small tribes and “primitive societies,” anthropologists studied spatially bounded communities such as ghettos, ethnic neighbourhoods, and “urban villages.” Social problems (especially poverty) were the focus of most urban anthropological research. In the 1960s and early '70s, Oscar Lewis’s controversial “culture of poverty” thesis generated intense debates on the meaning of culture, the need for historical contextualization, and the structural factors that produce urban inequalities. Anthropologists also debated the meanings of *city* and *urban*, which were initially informed by Western-biased knowledge. To avoid this ethnocentrism, urban anthropologists used ethnographic methods, historical analysis, and cross-cultural comparisons to explore the social mechanisms and cultural institutions that differentiate cities from “primitive” societies and peasant communities as well as Western from non-Western cities. Unlike earlier views, which depicted the city as the site of fragmentation, alienation, and impersonal relationships, urban ethnography has been powerful in showing the strong friendships, kinship relations, and ethnic solidarities that may structure interactions in urban centres.

During the 1970s, urban anthropologists also shifted attention from studies in the city (i.e., viewing the city as merely a site for research) to studies of the city (i.e., making the urban dimension central to the analysis of relationships and symbols). Some argued that only the latter should be considered “urban anthropology.” Typologies continued to be formulated to map diverse urban forms. One common typology was based on a distinction between industrial and preindustrial cities. Within these two categories, other classifications were

presented. Focusing on historical articulations between economic and political structures, Richard Fox, for example, distinguished among regal-ritual, administrative, mercantile, colonial, and industrial cities. Others have added types such as postcolonial, modernist, and postmodern cities.

Research in cities posed several methodological and conceptual challenges to anthropology. In particular, urban anthropologists were pioneers in questioning emphasis on holism and synchronic analysis. Political economy became useful in analyzing historical and contemporary forces that produce inequalities within and between cities. In addition, urban anthropologists tried to find other methods (such as network analysis and extended case studies) to research the city. By the early 1980s they also drew on methods and theoretical insights from other fields to grasp the complexity of urban life and to account for the multiple actors that shape the city and its spaces. Current studies are careful not to homogenize urban types and are sensitive to diversity between and within cities. Since the early 1990s, urban anthropologists have been studying a broad range of practical and theoretical issues such as homelessness, spatial practices, popular culture, social movements and citizenship, gender and racial inequalities, global processes, and transnational connections.

Farha Ghannam

National and transnational studies

With anthropology's historical orientation toward non-European societies, after the end of World War II many anthropologists were confronted with successful national movements, as the old colonial empires of Asia and Africa gave way to newly independent states.

The new states gave rise to new questions in anthropology: What are the cultural dimensions of political movements in general? Do national movements, does nationalism, have particular cultural dimensions? Are national movements

constituted culturally? To answer these questions, anthropologists borrowed the idea of “modernization” from political science and linked it to familiar anthropological objects, such as family and kin groups. In the 1960s the University of Chicago’s Committee on the Comparative Study of New Nations, which was composed of sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists, published *Old Societies, New States*, a collection of essays examining case studies of old cultural forms blending with new political institutions.

Modernization theory, however, was an intellectual project that developed in the shadow of the Cold War, and it was often more prescriptive of what might be than analytically descriptive of what was. Debates in later years focused on the shortcomings of the theory, and then the study of nationalism moved to the discipline of history, where the 19th-century roots of national movements were examined.

In the early 1980s Benedict Anderson, a political scientist, made the extremely influential move of analyzing nations as “imagined communities.” His argument that nations, like religions, are based on the relation of this world to the next allowed anthropologists to relate ideas of meaning and solidarity or culture and community to political movements. The 1980s then become a very productive time for the anthropological studies of nations. Yet these studies were formulated around ideas of a national culture, and this concept, other scholars argued, needed to be questioned. Ranajith Guha and the anticolonial historiographers of the subaltern studies collective argued on the one hand that nonelite groups share neither the political space nor the cultural world of national elites, and other anthropologists argued on the other hand that the idea that culture could be tied to a place such as a country was conceptually flawed.

Arjun Appadurai, a pioneer in the latter argument, went on to develop in a series of influential essays the anthropological field of transnational studies, which is based on an idea of culture not tied to a place but rather in flow. By thinking of

these flows as making up “scapes” such as “mediascapes,” these works allow anthropologists to understand the relationship between, say, between, say, satellite TV or the World Wide Web and a country’s national development. This approach also enables new anthropological inquiries into a rather old phenomenon, that of diasporas. Interconnections in the 21st century work in new ways radically different from the old, and the study of diasporic groups and the countries they call home highlights for anthropologists another fascinating 21st-century question: What are the boundaries of the nation?

Pradeep Jeganathan

The study of gender

Gender has always been a topic of anthropological investigation, but the 1970s brought about a critical rethinking of assumptions about gender, spurred in part by the women’s movement and in part by the entrance of large numbers of women into academic careers. During the next quarter century, this rethinking opened up new conceptual pathways for considering not only the relationships between sex and gender, kinship and procreation, men’s work and women’s work, and public and private spheres but also the significance of gender to language, primatology, archaeology, religion, and cosmology. At first many studies of gender focused primarily on women since they had been underrepresented in the anthropological record, but the result was that *gender* came to stand for *women*. A primary question in these early studies was how and why women were subordinated in patriarchal social systems. Soon, however, the awareness that men, too, have gender sparked a much deeper analysis of the ways in which definitions of gender were mutually constructed. Rather than assuming that gender is a natural given, therefore universal, based on an extension of animal mating behaviour, new studies demonstrated that, just as different societies produce a variety of religious, kinship, and economic systems, they also vary in terms of gender systems. While it was often assumed that sex

was the natural given and gender the cultural definition built upon that natural base, some studies have raised questions about the relation between sex and sexual orientation and, thus, whether there might be more than two genders and whether sex itself may, to a large extent, be culturally constructed. Studies of primates, long thought to hold the key to human behaviour, have shown that results depend to a significant extent on the theoretical lens through which scientists view their behaviour as well as on which primates are the object of study; this discovery has destabilized the ground on which many assumptions about gender were based. When the critical gender lens has been focused on the archaeological record, old biases and assumptions—for example, about “man the hunter, woman the gatherer”—have been overturned or significantly modified, new approaches to the study of the past and material culture have emerged, and origin stories have been changed.

Another area creatively affected by the focus on gender is that of linguistic anthropology: these researchers now note not just the gendered aspects of linguistic structure—pronouns, for example—but also the different ways in which women and men use language, asking to what extent gender is culturally constituted through linguistic practice over the life cycle. Other researchers have studied the way in which language lends connotations of gender to conceptual fields, for example, “soft” versus “hard” sciences, and how these labels may affect the women and men working in those fields.

Still others have raised questions about gender in topics that seem to have little connection to gender, such as colonialism and “Orientalism,” and in much broader systems including worldviews, theology, and cosmology; these researchers ask, for example, about the consequences for men and women when the deity is symbolically male and the earth is symbolically female. And some have even asked about the notions of gender implicit in the idea of the anthropologist and the anthropological endeavour itself. In short, the proliferation

of anthropological studies of gender during the last quarter of the 20th century opened up new paths to yet unexplored areas in the 21st.

Carol L. Delaney

Political and legal anthropology

While the intellectual and methodological roots of political anthropology can be traced to Montesquieu and Alexis de Tocqueville, who viewed politics and governance as cultural constructs, Elizabeth Colson dated the modern field of political anthropology to 1940 and the publication of *African Political Systems* (1940), edited by Meyer Fortes and Edward Evans-Pritchard. Edmund R. Leach's *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954) and Michael G. Smith's *Government in Zazzau* (1960) were landmark studies that contributed significantly to more refined conceptual approaches. Max Gluckman made a singular contribution to the development of the field both as the founder of the influential Manchester school and through his focus on the role of conflict, which provided an explanation for political change within the dominant functionalist paradigm then prevailing in anthropology. (The functionalist approach conceptualized societies as existing in a state of equilibrium.) From the traditional study of "stateless" societies to the contemporary analysis of complex state-society relations in an age of globalization, the central theoretical focus of political anthropology, as identified by Abner Cohen in *Two-Dimensional Man* (1974), has been the dialectical relations between symbolic action and power relationships.

Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (1980) were two major works employing a semiotic/hermeneutic approach. In *Stratagems and Spoils* (1969), F.G. Bailey illustrated an alternate approach, which applied game theory to the analysis of actor-driven politics. Problems of legitimacy are a central concern of political anthropology. This concern is seen in such works as David Kertzer's *Ritual*,

Politics, and Power (1988), which analyzes the role of ritual in maintaining and undermining regimes. In addition, the political role of symbols, myths, and rhetorical strategies are central foci of analysis. The essays in *The Frailty of Authority* (1986), a central volume of the *Political Anthropology* series edited by Myron J. Aronoff in the 1980s and '90s, deal with attempts to transform power into authority and to challenge the legitimacy of established authority in a wide variety of cultural contexts. If Émile Durkheim's functionalism dominated the early stages of the development of political anthropology, the intellectual influences of Max Weber and Karl Marx were more apparent during this phase of the field's development. Contemporary political anthropologists, having abandoned their predecessors' emphasis on cohesion and consensus, tend to focus more on political and cultural contestation.

Self-reflexive critical analyses of traditional fieldwork methods and the concept of culture and theoretical influences from feminist, postmodern, critical legal, and cultural studies (among others) have had a considerable impact on the development of the field. These trends are exemplified by *PoLAR (Political and Legal Anthropology Review)*; published by the Association for Political and Legal Anthropology, a unit of the American Anthropological Association) and in several series focusing on the field that have been published by several major university presses. Informing much contemporary analysis are the intellectual influence of Benedict Anderson's formulation of imagined community; Pierre Bourdieu's notions of *habitus*, *doxa*, and cultural capital, which reveal how power is inscribed in the scripts of everyday life; Michel Foucault's discourse analysis and concern with the multiple ways in which power is implicated in the constitution of all areas of social life; Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony; and Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere and emphasis on aspects of gender in politics and culture.

Among the many areas of interest to contemporary political anthropologists are the politics of collective identity (class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity,

and nationalism), collective memory (invention of tradition, commemoration, and memorialization), civil society, collective action (particularly political protest), democracy (and democratization), globalization and localization, and legal studies (among others). The blurring of disciplinary boundaries has resulted in a fruitful cross-fertilization of scholarship from anthropology, cultural studies, history, political science, sociology, and women's studies to produce a richly diverse field of study.

Myron J. Aronoff

Medical anthropology

Medical anthropology emerged as a special field of research and training after World War II, when senior American anthropologists were brought in as consultants on health care projects in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In the Cold War rhetoric of the time, aid to friendly "Third World countries" would strengthen their governments and forestall revolutionary discontent. In these countries—in stark contrast to countries with advanced economies—infectious diseases were the main cause of illness and death, and in many regions 50 percent or more of the infants born every year died before their fifth birthday. From 1945 through the 1960s, antibiotics were transforming the treatment of infectious diseases. Their use, combined with immunization of children, sanitation, and improved nutrition, was in the forefront of large-scale foreign aid programs.

The physicians who planned and directed health care projects at that time were almost immediately confronted with failure when townspeople underutilized their clinics, ignored instructions to boil water, or in other ways failed to comply with professional advice. Project workers were convinced that local cultural traditions formed a superstitious barrier to the rational behaviour that they advocated. In this early period the anthropologists they consulted usually accepted their formulation of the problem, but they encouraged a degree of cultural relativism

by suggesting ways that programs could acknowledge local customs and use traditional concepts to explain desirable new practices. This approach was illustrated in *Health, Culture, and Community* (1955; edited by Benjamin D. Paul), a collection of case studies first presented at the Harvard School of Public Health. The volume became a basic text among teachers who in the 1960s were encouraged, by private foundations and by the availability of research funding through the rapidly expanding National Institutes of Health, to initiate graduate programs in medical anthropology.

Shamanism and other forms of ritual curing had been a major topic in anthropology from the beginning of the discipline, but the first studies of the whole repertoire of illness concepts and therapeutic practices available to members of a community began in the 1960s and '70s. These years were a time of political turmoil in which anthropology was criticized as an artifact of European and American colonialism. Thus, students were alert to historical conflicts and injustice in the communities they studied, many of which were undergoing processes of decolonization. In addition, the tradition-modernity dichotomy, which then dominated research on cultural change, seemed to have little analytic value for understanding folk practitioners who were adding antibiotic injections to their repertoire of ritual curing and herbal remedies. Indeed, in their own society the rationality of modern Western medicine was challenged by scholars who faulted its epistemology—in particular, its positivist separation of mind and body, its dehumanizing focus on body parts, malfunctions, and lesions, and its treatment of pregnancy, birthing, and homosexuality as pathological rather than normal conditions.

The consulting work that originally focused anthropological attention on issues of health care was often ad hoc, but it did draw upon previous functionalist studies of acculturation. The second generation of scholars, who brought medical anthropology to maturity as a special field of research, considered functionalism to be a tautological and politically conservative set of theories.

Their work, which began to be published in the 1970s, was inspired by socialist thought, French structuralism, dynamic theories in psychological anthropology, and interpretive studies of cultural symbolism.

Americans took the lead in developing medical anthropology as a distinctive field of scholarship and practical work, but European scholars and practitioners have also founded specialist societies, journals, and monograph series. As the field expanded, subspecialties focused on issues such as infectious diseases, aging, and nutrition emerged.

The label *critical medical anthropology* was created by Marxist scholars who faulted much work in the field for neglecting inequities in the political economy. A textbook by Hans A. Baer, Merrill Singer, and Ida Susser, *Medical Anthropology and the World System: A Critical Perspective* (1997), presents the Marxist critique. This approach has been assimilated in an ecumenical and philosophically complex approach set forth in Byron Good's *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective* (1994). Paul Farmer's *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (2003) is a major work of this kind.

Charles Miller Leslie

The anthropology of food, nutrition, and agriculture

Examinations of the topics of food, nutrition, and agriculture illustrate the intersection of different subfields of anthropology, particularly physical anthropology, archaeology, and social and cultural anthropology.

Anthropologists have contributed to the specialized fields of nutrition and agriculture a more holistic perspective based on the use of history, direct observation, and documentary accounts; the examination of nutrition and

agriculture within households and communities; and the interconnections between different parts of the food system—including markets, cuisine, farming systems, international regulations, and trade, for example. Distinct theoretical perspectives such as the materialist, evolutionary, symbolic, and ecological are reflected in anthropological work in these areas (including, for example, symbolic theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas, as well as materialist theories of Marvin Harris and Sidney Mintz).

The specialized field of nutritional anthropology was defined in North America in the mid-1970s, although anthropologists have been interested in food since the late 19th century. Food is the foundation of every economy and plays a key part of the ethnographic description of every people, their society and culture.

Both anthropologists and archaeologists have researched the evolution of subsistence systems and how farming emerged (with many attendant changes in technology) from food gathering about 10,000 years ago. Concern with the time and place of the first appearance of domesticated plants and animals has given way to questions about how domestication occurred under a variety of ecological conditions at different times and places. Hunting and gathering, horticulture, pastoralism, and the development of agriculture demonstrate different ways in which people have adapted to their environment to feed themselves. The past hundred years have seen the rapid development of industrial agriculture and industrial food systems. Anthropologists have documented how processes such as colonialism, industrial capitalism, and agribusiness have radically changed food production and people's diets, often through the favouring of cash crops over food crops. Detailed ethnographic fieldwork exposes the health consequences of dietary change, including increased or decreased rates of malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies.

Some anthropologists have concentrated on food's ability to convey meaning. Food is a marker of ethnicity, gender, and class. Anthropologists have shown

how different social groups create and maintain relationships through the sharing of food. Food figures prominently in studies of religion where the symbolic importance of bread, corn, or rice, for example, is emphasized through ritual.

Women's special relation to food is highlighted in studies of food production and provisioning and is also reflected in the prevalence of eating disorders among women (anorexia nervosa, bulimia, obesity, addiction to dieting, etc.). Women, as gatekeepers of household food provisioning, are not always able to control their own dietary intake.

Access to food is perhaps the most basic human right, bringing together work on food, nutrition, and agriculture from an applied anthropology perspective.

Anthropologists regularly enter into policy debates on food security, exploring how nutrition and agricultural interventions in developing countries may result in increased food insecurity. They critique government officials, development workers, and local elites who try to rationalize peasant farming systems based on Western farming systems. Research at the turn of the 21st century explored how farmers in different parts of the world maintain genetic diversity as a strategy to ensure food security; anthropologists and others examined how biotechnology and genetically modified food may influence food diversity and food security in the future.

Penny Van Esterik

Environmental and ecological studies in anthropology

Analysis of the relations between human societies and their environments is much older than the discipline of anthropology, but from the start anthropologists have had an abiding interest in the topic. A view known as environmental determinism, which holds that environmental features directly

determine aspects of human behaviour and society, was propounded by many Enlightenment philosophers, who argued that differences among peoples were not innate but were due to climate, landscape, and other environmental factors. By the early 20th century, however, environmental determinism was under attack by influential anthropologists such as A.L. Kroeber. These critics argued that the environment might limit the spread of certain sociocultural features (making agriculture impossible in the Arctic, for example) but that it cannot explain why features such as agriculture originated and spread in other areas.

This latter view, known as “possibilism,” is still dominant in anthropology and many other social sciences and humanities, but possibilism itself has limitations. First, historical, archaeological, and ethnographic evidence indicates that the patterned associations between environmental features and sociocultural ones cannot be viewed in possibilist terms; for example, agriculture was not practiced by Native Americans in California, even though it was environmentally possible, while in North America’s arid Southwest, other Indian peoples transformed the environment through irrigation agriculture.

In reaction to the determinist-possibilist debate, Julian Steward in 1955 developed an approach he termed cultural ecology. Steward proposed that cultures interact with their environmental settings by adapting features of technology, economic organization, and even kinship or religion to allow people to best pursue their livelihoods. Thus, cultural ecology views the environment as presenting problems and opportunities, not just limits or simple determinants, while recognizing that the resulting cultural adaptations depend as much on the sociocultural features at hand as on the environment. For example, a population with stone tools and relying on wild foods will adapt to the Australian bush in very different ways than one with domesticated sheep, metal, and fossil fuels. Steward developed cultural ecology in influential studies of Great Basin American Indians and other hunter-gatherers and of the rise of complex societies in arid

valleys scattered around the globe. Prominent studies that followed in Steward's footsteps include Richard Lee's work on the !Kung San of Africa's Kalahari desert and Robert Netting's work on household agricultural production. The cultural ecology approach has also been very influential within archaeology.

One of the most famous works in ecological anthropology is Roy Rappaport's study of the Tsembaga Maring of highland New Guinea. In it he argued that Tsembaga ritual regulated pig husbandry and the incidence of warfare and thereby responded to environmental "feedback" by adjusting human population densities, work effort, food production, and a host of other factors. Rappaport's study exemplifies the very popular notion that premodern human-environment systems are closely regulated to maintain a balance or equilibrium through complex, often unrecognized feedback mechanisms that maintain population below environmental "carrying capacity."

This equilibrium-centred view was widely challenged within anthropology beginning in the 1970s, however. The approach known as *political ecology* criticizes it for portraying premodern societies as timeless and outside of history. Other anthropologists, working under the label *historical ecology*, reject not only the equilibrium approach but also the notion of static nonhuman environments, stressing that all environments inhabited by human societies in the past 50,000 years are "anthropogenic" (that is, modified or engineered by activities such as controlled burning, irrigation, terracing, etc.). Taking another approach, behavioral ecologists guided by modern evolutionary theory argue that humans, like all species, are designed to efficiently convert resources into offspring and that any group-level phenomenon such as population equilibrium is a by-product of individual adaptation. Increasingly, research guided by these three approaches is replacing or at least transforming the legacy of Stewardian cultural ecology.

The field of ethno-ecology focuses on the ways people conceptualize elements of the natural environment and human activity within it and investigates how these

concepts vary culturally as well as reveal universal aspects of human cognition. Another trend in contemporary environmental studies at the turn of the 21st century was the growing importance of applied research, focused on such issues as environmental justice and sustainable development (see *below*).

Eric A. Smith

Development anthropology

The final quarter of the 20th century saw an increasing involvement of social anthropologists with the process of accelerated incorporation of formerly colonial countries into the world economic system. Referred to as *development*, the process of incorporation involves the transfer to poor countries of technology, funding, and expertise from countries of the industrial north through multinational, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations and increasingly by private-sector corporations. Although some anthropologists were involved in the immediate post-World War II period of decolonization, the emergence of development anthropology as an academically acceptable subfield dates only from the 1980s. At the turn of the 21st century, most graduate departments of anthropology in the United States, Great Britain, and France included at least one specialist in the application of anthropological theory and methods, particularly those of political ecology, to the achievement of an economic development that is also equitable, environmentally sustainable, culturally pluralistic, and socially just. A perhaps larger number of development anthropologists are employed outside of academia, by government aid agencies, the World Bank, United Nations agencies, and various nongovernmental organizations such as OXFAM, World Union for the Conservation of Nature, and CARE. Over time, anthropologists have moved from being peripheral members of the teams to being team leaders, responsible for assuring that the work of all technical specialists is socially sound.

The legitimacy of a specifically development-oriented anthropology has been challenged by persons fundamentally wedded to cultural relativism, who argue that anthropologists might describe social change but should never participate in causing it. Increasingly, though, the profession has acknowledged the moral necessity of rejecting those who hold to an inviolability of local culture, even when this position results in poverty, infant mortality, child labour, gender hierarchies, and the general exclusion of the poor from democratic participation in government. This commitment to improving the well-being and the political power of the poor has been challenged also by some other development specialists, particularly neoliberal economists, for whom the prime measure of national development is not increasing equity but growth in gross national product (GNP) per capita.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of development anthropologists has been the demonstration to economists and technical specialists that the “beneficiaries” of development, the low-income majorities in poor countries, must be active participants at all levels of the process if it is to be successful. This means that their expertise as resource managers must be acknowledged and fully incorporated in the identification, design, implementation, and evaluation of development projects. Anthropologists have also demonstrated the internal complexity and socioeconomic differentiation (by class, age, gender, ethnicity, education, etc.) of local communities that were assumed by outside “experts” to be homogeneous. Development anthropologists have repeatedly demonstrated that projects assumed to be broadly beneficial have too often created more losers than winners.

Among the areas where anthropologists have had a substantial impact on development thinking are river basin interventions, especially involving population resettlement upstream and downstream from large hydropower dams; pastoral production systems on semiarid rangelands; community environmental management and social forestry; the gender dimensions of development;

ethno-medicine and the incorporation of indigenous practitioners within health delivery systems; and indigenous knowledge and biodiversity.

Michael M Horowitz

Applied anthropology

Applied anthropology is the aspect of anthropology that serves practical community or organizational needs. In Europe this subfield started in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when ethnographic information was collected and used by colonial Belgian, French, British, Dutch, and Russian administrators. In North America the Mexican government in 1917 was the first to officially recognize its usefulness.

All branches of anthropology have applied aspects. Physical anthropologists work in forensics and industrial design. Archaeologists support historic preservation. Anthropological linguists have designed educational programs and whole writing systems. Some degree of identification with other disciplines, especially sociology, is frequent. Practitioners may have supplementary credentials in fields such as public health or law.

Among the many professional groups associated with applied anthropology are Anthropology in Action (in Britain), the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) and the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (in the United States), and the Society of Applied Anthropology (in Canada). France, Russia, and India have government departments devoted to anthropological research, some of which has applied value. Since the 1980s anthropologists working outside of research institutions at times have been called “practicing anthropologists.” Applied or practicing anthropologists are almost never licensed or certified. They may, however, perform legally mandated studies, such as environmental impact assessments or gender analyses, for governments or international agencies.

The support of policy-related decision making is common to much of applied social or cultural anthropology. The typical approach is holistic and gives attention to context. Flexible research methodologies often combine statistical techniques with participatory, qualitative methods such as participant observation, case studies, focus groups, key informant interviews, or rapid appraisal. The work may entail service as a “culture broker” or even conflict mediation. Some practitioners become advocates promoting specific groups’ interests. “Action anthropologists” work as insiders to help manage change and build self-sufficiency. Applied activities are rarely documented in widely accessible publications.

Applied anthropology has made positive contributions to public life. Industrial research in the 1930s and ’40s influenced modern business administration and management techniques and theories. In many countries, including Australia, Canada, India, Mexico, Russia, and the United States, anthropologists have helped to negotiate or implement policies strengthening indigenous peoples’ rights. On a global scale, Franz Boas deserves credit for stimulating the research that proved, as a 1963 United Nations declaration states, “that any doctrine of racial differentiation or superiority is scientifically false.”

Present-day employment of applied anthropologists by industries such as mining (e.g., in Western Australia) shows, on the other hand, that practitioners may work against indigenous peoples’ interests rather than for them. Anthropologists working on behalf of governments (e.g., Mexico or China) have at times promoted an approach to “acculturation” that disregards indigenous peoples’ social needs and values.

Applied anthropology tends to be a controversial pursuit. Early anthropologists’ claims of “ethical neutrality” vis-à-vis colonial policies were challenged in France and Great Britain. Conflicts about involvement in the Vietnam War and other Cold War projects created deep rifts in American anthropology during the 1960s and

'70s. In the 1980s American, British, and Canadian professional associations responded to such conflicts by writing codes of ethics establishing minimum (but nonenforceable) standards for professional conduct. Ongoing debates sustain a wholesome concern about moral and political dilemmas posed by some applied projects. Some of the most vigorous critiques are written by applied anthropologists themselves.

Suzanne L. Hanchett

Visual anthropology

Visual anthropology is both the practice of anthropology through a visual medium and the study of visual phenomena in culture and society. Therein lie the promise and dilemma of the field. Associated with anthropology since the mid-to-late 19th century, it has not attained the status of a subdiscipline with a distinct set of theories and methods. Historically, it has been a collection of diverse interests and practices, most notably in the use of visual data for analysis, the application of film and photography as tools in field research, and, to a lesser extent, the dissemination of anthropological ideas through visual media, pedagogical and other public interest applications in education, museums, and commercial and public media. More specifically, there have been two recent developments: the study of all manner of visual representation and communication and, most promising though less widely pursued, the attempt to realize an entire anthropological project through visual media (especially film) alone.

Film and photography have been the longest-standing concerns, but ethnographic film has come closest to achieving genre status and received the most attention and blame. There is still no agreement about the status of ethnographic film in anthropology or in film studies. This ambivalence is due to the 19th-century heritage of anthropology, representing science and positivism

on the one hand and humanities, romanticism, and hermeneutics on the other. Add to this the dual components of filmmaking, documentation and aesthetics. Initially wedded to functional theory in anthropology and realist aesthetics in art and literature, film seemed easily adaptable to a “scientific” visual project. Though largely ignored by anthropologists, the aesthetic aspects of film were also present from the beginning, a circumstance that led to 100 years of misunderstanding. Filmmaking and ethnographic requirements are often at odds, compounded by the different competencies demanded by the two disciplines—expertise in both is rarely brought together in one person.

Nevertheless, over the past 100 years, a large body of visual work that is loosely identified as ethnographic has grown up around the world. Films so designated either are made by anthropologists or have significant anthropological components in their production or substance. North American, Australian, and western European varieties of ethnographic film are better known and more available than the significant though less accessible traditions of central and eastern European, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese filmmaking. In the West, even stylistically different bodies of work have been recognized: from the classic films of Robert Flaherty (*Nanook of the North*) to the contemporary films of Robert Gardner, Jean Rouch, John Marshall, David and Judith MacDougall, and Tim Asch and Napoleon Chagnon, TV series such as *Disappearing World*, *Odyssey*, and the longest-running Japanese TV series, *Our Wonderful World*.

Today visual anthropology is home to a wide array of approaches and concerns, ranging from cultural studies (with their textual orientation) to new digital media technologies—video (fast replacing film), CD-ROM (with its encyclopaedic and storage capabilities), DVD (delivering high-quality video and audio signals), the Internet (with its worldwide reach)—and indigenous or intercultural media (film or video produced by members of First Nations [native peoples of North America], non-Western societies, or those outside the dominant cultures in Western societies). Some of these new departures rely on visual-aural media as the sole

and autonomous means of creating and delivering anthropological knowledge and understanding.

Film is still central to visual anthropology, but photography and other media, especially new digital technologies, are fast catching up. Despite many production problems, “ethnographic” films are being made in ever-increasing numbers throughout the world, festivals showcasing these films have multiplied, and new centres and associations of visual anthropology have been set up in many places. With the decreasing cost of new technologies, access to visual communication is being democratized. And, with the gradual liberation of visual expression from dependence on written materials, the stage is set for the flowering of diverse approaches in the garden of visual anthropology, fulfilling the promise of an anthropology entirely through visual means.

Ákos Östör

Ethnomusicology

Music can be described as humanly organized, meaningful sounds that have physical properties and physiological, psychological, social, and cultural attributes (to the extent these can or should be distinguished in practice).

Ethnomusicology, literally the study of the music of communities (*ethnos*), has been defined as the study of music in its social and cultural context. In this sense it is a combination of anthropology and musicology, and it shares many of its formative influences with anthropology, sociology, psychology, and folklore on the one hand and musicology, music theory, art history, and literary criticism on the other. Although the field of study can be traced to the late 19th century, the term *ethnomusicology* entered common usage only in the 1950s.

Some of the important questions in ethnomusicology can be traced to ancient Greek philosophers, Muslim scholars, and Enlightenment philosophers, but the invention of the wax cylinder recorder by Thomas Edison in 1877 had a definitive

impact on the formation and development of the field. The audio recorder enabled travelers to collect sounds in distant locations and bring them to specialists who analyzed and preserved them in museum-like settings using specialized equipment in ways that resembled the data and artifact collections of anthropologists. The Berlin Phonogrammarchiv, founded in 1900 and staffed by active scientists, became one of the centres of research and theoretical diffusion in the first third of the 20th century. Colonialism, nationalism, and folklore influenced the collection and analysis of regional and national traditions and their use by scholars, composers, and the general public.

In the United States the anthropological study of music, like so many facets of American anthropology, was strongly influenced by Franz Boas. His students trained several influential scholars, among them Bruno Nettl (author of *Encyclopædia Britannica's* article on folk music) and Alan Merriam, whose influential *Anthropology of Music* (1964) is still widely read. Other anthropologically trained figures who have had a strong impact on the development of ethnomusicology include John Blacking, Steven Feld, and Hugo Zemp.

Ethnomusicological approaches to musical performance have generally paralleled the rest of anthropology—virtually every theoretical development in anthropology has its counterpart in ethnomusicological publications, from evolutionism and diffusionism to functionalism, structuralism, ethnoscience, literary criticism, and beyond. Ethnomusicology has also generated its own internal debates specifically related to the analysis of sound and the field's relationship to the other humanities and social sciences.

At the start of the 21st century, ethnomusicologists were found in many countries; research and teaching programs had emerged on every continent; and national, regional, and international professional associations were quite active—the largest of these being the International Council for Traditional Music,

a nongovernmental organization affiliated with UNESCO, and the U.S.-based Society for Ethnomusicology, both of which publish excellent journals. Again paralleling anthropology, increasing numbers of ethnomusicologists since 1980 have studied music within their own societies; distinctive schools have arisen in certain countries and regions, and increasing attention has been given to popular music and the globalization of the recorded audiovisual industry. In addition to their involvement in ethnomusicology as an academic field of research and teaching, many ethnomusicologists are active in public- and private-sector cultural programs—working in ministries of culture and education, festival production, radio stations, software development companies, and other culture industries. They publish songbooks and audio recordings, compose or perform music of researched communities, and create music curricula for schools. Increasingly, professorships in ethnomusicology were housed in schools of music, rather than anthropology departments, at least in part because of a general decline in the anthropological interest in the arts in the late 20th century.